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**Melancholic reactions to loss
in couples and families**

Introduction

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Given the centrality of loss in any psychoanalytic work, it seems appropriate to focus on manifestations of unresolved losses in couples and families in this issue of the Review. In line with the Review's objective, this issue represents a six handed collaboration from different countries and languages and offers an intercultural perspective on loss interventions with couples and families, with contributions from South America, Australia and Europe. The result of this collaboration provides various theoretical perspectives on loss, incorporating Freud's classic contributions on mourning and melancholia and Klein's detailed understanding of the psychic process involved in mourning. Drawing on these conceptualisations, the articles also highlight theoretical

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advances that underline intersubjective perspectives and demonstrate their usefulness in working with couples and families.

The article by Jean-George Lemaire, “*Deuil ou nostalgie, ou nostalgie et travail de deuil. À partir de l’expérience des thérapies psychanalytiques des couples*”, returning to the most classic theorisations on mourning and melancholy, adds the notion of nostalgia. The author regards nostalgia as being related to a partial and idealized object within an imaginary relation to archaic satisfactions that are linked to infantile omnipotence.

In their contribution, “*The road between Corinth and Thebes: Adoption and loss*”, Krisztina Glausius and Julie Humphries draw on the myth of Oedipus to explore the impact of traumatic loss experienced by adopting couples, particularly when the mourning necessary to overcome these traumatic losses is incomplete. The authors use two clinical cases from their work at the Tavistock Centre for Relationships to illustrate their point.

Irma Morosini, in his article “*La reacción melancólica: obstáculo para la elaboración del duelo. Situación clínica en una familia*”, also refers to a clinical case to illustrate the effects on the intersubjective psychic world, of a suspended mourning. He reports the clinical case of a family who seek help because of the difficulties with their younger son who has been diagnosed as psychotic. The author shows how analytic work provides access to truth, anger and understanding of transgenerational repetition.

The article by André Carel, “*Expérience de catastrophe, mélancolie froide et trilogie défensive. Paradoxalité fermée, perversion narcissique, incestualité*”, questions the notions of closed paradoxality, narcissistic perversion and incest. By studying the links between the experience of individual and family group, the author analyses the dynamics of perinatal trauma disaster, by focusing on loss, object value and cold melancholy as a defensive trilogy.

In their contribution, “*Blame in the couple: Connections to past loss*”, Timothy Keogh and Cynthia Gregory-Roberts examine the emergence of fault as a manifestation of complicated mourning in couple relationships. Through examples of clinical cases, the authors focus on how to work in situations of melancholic reactions to loss that hinder the couple relationships.

The article by Rossella Del Guerra, “*De la actuación a la elaboración: un recorrido difícil*”, referring to a clinical case of couple psychoanalytic psychotherapy based in a particular social context, describes the defensive interlacing fabric which is built up by both partners who try to avoid the psychological pain implicit in the work of mourning related to multiple and successive losses that have occurred in their lives.

The contribution of René Kaës, “*Quelques effets dans la fratrie de la mort d’un parent. Le travail de l’héritage*”, focuses on the difficult work of mourning within the fraternal group when a parent dies. By showing the destructive effects of such a situation, as well as the opportunities it offers to reinforce the fraternal bond that this mourning brings, the author also questions the necessary work of inheritance. Also dedicated to the fraternal dimension, the article by Massimiliano Sommantico, “*The dead sibling: A family secret and its consequences*”, proposes a clinical example of psychoanalytic family therapy, highlighting the relevance of the dynamics of hatred and rivalry that can characterise

fraternal bonds. The author, focusing on the common and shared psychic world of the family, and through the use of dream analysis, highlights the rivalrous identification of the daughter to her dead older brother, as well as the hateful bond between the same girl and the younger brother.

The article by Patricia Kupferberg, *“Infidelidades. Entre la pérdida y el exceso”*, addresses the issue of infidelity according to different conceptualisations of the link: as a link symptom, it is in relation to the absence-loss of a primary object; as a link disorder, it is in relation to an excess compared to the perception of one sector of the presence of the other; as resistance to link, is in relation to the attempt to annul the alienation as a product of the link.

The last contribution, *“Projective De-compensation: Mourning the loss of projective identifications in a couple”*, written by Lucia Morabito, deals with projective de-compensation and its relevance for loss. Using clinical material relating to two pairs of psychoanalytic psychotherapy sessions, the author describes the interruption of the projective and introjective identifications triggered by the presence of the analyst, which previously inhibited the mourning process in the couple.

The voice of the Dictionary written by Massimiliano Sommantico, *“Les pathologies du deuil”*, tries to trace the course of Racamier’s work in relation to pathological mourning. In particular, by referring to the notion of interactive topography, the author analyses the concepts of an expelled bereavement, with an associated transportation or exportation of the work of mourning, which represents a narcissistic and thus blocked mourning, which can lead to denial and a refusal of mourning.

Finally, the book review written by René Kaës provides a profound and insightful analysis of the proposed theorisations in the book *“Diálogos clínicos sobre psicoanálisis con familias y parejas”*, edited by David E. Scharff and Monica Vorchheimer.